

## PRESS RELEASE

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[Immediate 16/3/11]

### **IBRA welcomes UN report on global bee threats**

Members of the COLOSS (Prevention of honey bee COLony LOSSes) Network, which currently consists of 246 scientists from 54 countries, have recently contributed to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report "Global honey bee disorders and other threats to insect pollinators".

One of the report's authors, IBRA Trustee Dr Peter Neumann says: "The transformation of the countryside and rural areas in the past half century or so has triggered a decline in wild-living bees and other pollinators. Society is increasingly investing in 'industrial-scale' hives and managed colonies to make up the shortfall and going so far as to truck bees around to farms and fields in order to maintain our food supplies".

The UNEP report shows that media perceptions of colony loss are now supported by reliable survey data showing extensive losses in Europe, North America and Asia. It discusses a range of possible causes, from the well established and understood, such as habitat loss and pests and diseases, to others including climate change and electromagnetic radiation. The effect of agricultural pesticides and the use of chemicals within bee hives for pest control, and husbandry factors such as the long distance transport of colonies for crop pollination are also highlighted.

Despite some controversy, the scientific consensus is that there is no single cause of honey bee colony losses, but pests and diseases, especially the parasitic varroa mite, are the most important. Varroa is especially damaging because it transmits a range of otherwise benign viruses, causing the rapid death of colonies. Varroa is present in all countries where extensive colony losses have been reported, and is notably absent in Australia, where unexplained losses have not occurred.

IBRA's Scientific Director, Norman Carreck says: "Less clear, however, is the solution for these problems. Undoubtedly, habitat conservation is of primary importance in redressing the shortage of suitable forage for bees, but novel methods of control of varroa and other pests and diseases, including biological control agents or breeding disease resistant bees, will all have a role in providing long-term solutions".

[Ends]

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

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### NOTES FOR EDITORS:-

1.1 The full UNEP Report "Global bee colony disorders and other threats to insect pollinators", can be downloaded at:-

[http://www.unep.org/dewa/Portals/67/pdf/Global\\_Bee\\_Colony\\_Disorder\\_and\\_Threats\\_insect\\_pollinators.pdf](http://www.unep.org/dewa/Portals/67/pdf/Global_Bee_Colony_Disorder_and_Threats_insect_pollinators.pdf)

1.2 The COLOSS Network was established in December 2008 and is funded through COST Action FA 0803 and a grant from the Ricola Foundation. More information can be found at:-

<http://www.coloss.org/>

2. The International Bee Research Association ("IBRA") is the world's longest established apicultural research publishers and promotes the value of bees by providing information on bee science and beekeeping worldwide.

3. IBRA is a Registered Charity, and its Council of trustees boasts some of the world's leading bee scientists.

4. IBRA publishes the following peer reviewed scientific journals: -

4.1 The *Journal of Apicultural Research* was founded by IBRA in 1962. It includes original research articles, theoretical papers; scientific notes and comments; together with authoritative reviews on scientific aspects of the biology, ecology, natural history and culture of all types of bee.

4.2 The *Journal of ApiProduct and ApiMedical Science* was launched by IBRA in 2009. It focuses upon evidence based research being carried out on biologically relevant properties of bee and hive products, and their scientific relevance in the fields of medicine, nutrition and healthcare. This journal provides a forum where the efficacy and effectiveness of bee and hive products with therapeutic properties can be presented, debated and evaluated using scientific principles.

5. IBRA publishes and sells books on bee science and beekeeping.

6. IBRA also provides bee information services.

7. Membership of IBRA costs just £31.50 annually. Membership benefits include receipt of four quarterly issues of *Bee World*, an accessible and topical journal on latest bee research, news, reviews and other relevant information for the bee scientist, beekeeper, and anyone with an interest in bees.

International Bee Research Association

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